DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 243 606 PS 014 412

AUTHOR Uhlenberg, Beverly
TITLE When Parents Need Help with Parenting Are Educators Used as a Resource? No. 19.
INSTITUTION North Dakota Univ., Grand Forks. Bureau of Educational Research and Services.
PUB DATE Aug 83
NOTE 70p.
AVAILABLE FROM Bureau of Educational Research and Services, Box 8158, University Station, Grand Forks, ND 58202 (Report No. 19, $2.00).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Ability; Accreditation (Institutions); *Child Rearing; Elementary Secondary Education; *Helping Relationship; Incidence; *Parents; *Parent Teacher Cooperation; Private Schools; Public Schools; Questionnaires; *School Personnel; State Surveys; Teacher Participation
IDENTIFIERS *North Dakota

ABSTRACT

A study was made of the characteristics of help provided by educators to North Dakota parents presenting parenting problems and concerns. Dependent variables were frequency of parental requests and educators' perceived ability to be helpful. Data collected from responses to a questionnaire enabled analysis of the differences between dependent variables and (1) school category; (2) willingness of educator to help; (3) sex of educator; (4) marital status of educator; (5) number of children to which educator is a parent; (6) public or private school; (7) position of school personnel; (8) subject assignment; (9) number of years of educational experience; (10) institution from which degree was received; (11) parenting classes offered by school; (12) parenting classes offered by a community organization; (13) building enrollment; and (14) district enrollment. A random sample of 21 North Dakota schools was selected; the sample was stratified by accreditation level and by public or private designation. A total of 376 educators (of approximately 440 possible respondents) completed and returned the questionnaire. Results are discussed, numerous conclusions and recommendations are offered, and the questionnaire is appended. (RH)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

ED243606

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☒ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

PS

# WHEN PARENTS NEED HELP WITH PARENTING ARE EDUCATORS USED AS A RESOURCE?

Beverly Uhlenberg

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Larry L. Smiley
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

PS 014412

Published by the Bureau of Educational Research and Services
University of North Dakota
No. 19, August 1983
Grand Forks, North Dakota 58202

# When Parents Need Help with Parenting
# Are Educators Used as a Resource?

by

Beverly Uhlenberg

Bureau of Educational Research and Services
University of North Dakota
Grand Forks, North Dakota

August, 1983

## FOREWORD

Each year the Bureau of Educational Research and Services publishes monographs reporting student and faculty research in education. This monograph comes from the doctoral research of Beverly Uhlenberg, who recently completed the Doctor of Philosophy degree at the University of North Dakota.

She has attempted to answer a number of questions concerning the matter of parenting, and specifically how educators are involved in parenting. Her research was drawn from a sample of North Dakota schools and reports the findings of that sample. Her conclusions and accompanying recommendations have implications for programs in teacher education programs in colleges and universities, as well as for in-service programs in elementary and secondary schools both within the state of North Dakota and elsewhere.

Larry L. Smiley, Director
Bureau of Educational Research and Services

## CHAPTER I

## PARENTING--PRESENT EXPECTATIONS AND A BRIEF HISTORY

A primary task for parents has been to assist their children to grow and develop. The nurturing of children to assist them to reach their full emotional, intellectual, social, and physical potential is currently called "parenting." "The challenge of parenting is to relate to children in ways that stimulate their potentialities for growth and provide appropriate opportunities for experiences that develop these potentialities" (Brooks 1981, p. 2). The skills needed to help children grow and develop are generally believed to be learned rather than innate. Some of the learning may be rather unconscious and result from interaction in the environment in which one happened to be reared. Learning how to parent continues during the process of parenting on a trial and error basis. Parents may not remain satisfied with the trial and error approach, however, and may seek formal training or good models to imitate if they become dissatisfied with their parenting skills. In addition to wanting more information, parents may also feel the need for a support group.

American families have experienced considerable change during the Twentieth Century. Families are more mobile; therefore, young parents are less likely to live near their own parents or grand-

parents. Families are smaller so older children are less likely to care for younger siblings. The number of children reported as experiencing abuse from their parents is increasing so more children may be exposed to poor models. There is an increase in one-parent families so children have less of an opportunity to learn skills from both sexes. The number of two-career families has increased so children spend increasing number of hours with peers and fewer hours with parents.

For any of all of these reasons, parents may not have learned parenting skills as well as they now wish they would have. The opportunities to learn parenting in the family setting are reduced at the same time there appears to be an upsurge in interest in the topic. "Parents seem more challenged today than ever before in trying to figure out what being a parent is all about and what they ought to be doing to help their children grow into productive adults" (Fine 1979, p. 3).

Many parenting books are available; still, parents with parenting problems and concerns often wish to discuss specific questions and concerns with a person rather than simply read general information on the topic. The extended family may not be near, so some other source of help needs to be sought. Possible sources typically available to help with specific aspects of parenting are doctors, religious leaders, social workers, psychologists or counselors, and educators. However, according to research by Yankelovich, Skelly, and White Inc. (1977, p. 119), more parents indicated they would first seek help from teachers when they had parenting concerns or were experiencing parenting problems than they would from any other group of professionals.

School personnel have been providing advice and/or information about some aspects of parenting during regular parent-teacher conferences or special problem-solving meetings even when parents have not requested this information. Some writers in educational publications are saying that parents want or need more help with parenting than this infrequent contact provides.

Several writers have suggested that school professionals and children benefit directly from the efforts exerted to help parents develop parenting skills. "In general, children who have the benefit of knowledgeable and caring parents perform more effectively than children who lack the nurturance and interaction that results from positive parenting" (Swick and Duff 1979, p. 23). "The school budget, the program of instruction, the expertise and time commitments of personnel in the school system must all focus upon the advancement of effective parenting and the enhancement of active parent concerns as major objectives of the school system" (Bell 1980, p. 227).

Schaefer (1979) emphasized the impact of the quality of parental teaching by comparing it with the influence of teachers on a child's intellectual development. He states that good teachers certainly do have an impact on children's learning but it is on a temporary basis because the child is soon promoted to another professional and the contact and influence is lost. Parents, on the other hand, influence the child's learning from birth to maturity. The duration of influence of parents exceeds that of anyone else. Therefore, so the argument goes, working with parents to help them develop parenting skills is a very effective way to influence the child's cognitive development.

Recently the theme of parenting education appears to have broadened to a concern for all aspects of a child's development rather than concentrating on cognitive development alone. The idea is that if children are going to develop physically, emotionally, socially, morally, and intellectually a healthy home environment is needed and that environment has to be arranged by someone other than the child. Children are dependent on adults to provide for their basic needs and if parents do not know how to provide for basic needs the children are at a disadvantage. "Since children are living in the environment provided by their parents, it is valid to say that without better parents there cannot be better children" (Gordon and Wallin 1975, p. 159). Gordon and Wallin continue:

> At every stage, from conception to the training of older children, parents must show good judgment. And such judgment must rest on a solid basis of information and understanding. To do their job with a high level of effectiveness, parents today should have a sound knowledge of the structure and functioning of the human body and of the principles of health maintenance. Also, they should have some insight into the findings of such sciences as psychology and socioiogy, as they relate to the development of children and their interaction with parents. We have emphasized that parenting is not a science, but it does draw on the resources and accomplishments of science in various fields (Gordon and Wallin 1975, p. 173-4).

According to Bell (1980), school leaders generally believe that effective parenting has declined and the family is in trouble. He states that schools, as well as other institutions, have responsibility for promoting effective parenting (p. 227).

Swick and Duff also describe the family as a changing instiution which will be strengthened by support from school professionals.

> Parents today more than in the past must be guidance counselors, nutritionists, facilitators, planners, budget makers, and family managers. The complexity of parenting is such that many unprepared adults have opted out of the parent role, and others have shifted the responsibility to teachers, baby-sitters, and child-care workers. The implication of these changes for children, teachers, citizens, and parents are several. First, parenting needs to become a more cooperative process involving everyone in the community. Second, parents must receive more preparation for their parenting role. Third, they need support and assistance in maintaining a productive home environment. Fourth, there is an urgent need for a closer working relationship between home and school (Swick and Duff 1979, p. 6).

Parenting education is not a new idea in America. It has been receiving organized attention at least since the early 1880s. Written material, first from Europe and then from the United States, was a popular source of parenting information. Parent education has been available from organizations, school districts, and departments of the federal government.

There is general agreement in the literature that both parents and children benefit when parents have skills necessary to be good parents. A number of sources of parenting help have been identified. The specific interest of this researcher, however, was to determine how frequently educators were asked to be the source of help, to identify the specific concerns about which parents asked educators, and to determine whether or not educators believed they were knowledgeable in these areas.

## CHAPTER II

## DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AND ITS FINDINGS

The problem of this exploratory study was to determine whether or not parents of North Dakota school children sought help from educators regarding parenting problems and concerns; to identify the type of information for which help was sought; to determine whether or not educators were willing to help parents when parents had parenting problems; to identify the aspects of parenting in which educators felt able to be helpful and those aspects in which educators felt unable to be helpful, and to learn the source of their parenting information. The data collected permitted an analysis to be made of the differences between each of the dependent variables and school category, willingness of educator to be helpful to parents, sex of educators, marital status of educator, number of children educator had as a parent, public or private school, school position, subject assignment, number of years of educational experience, institution from which degree was received, parenting classes offered by school, parenting classes offered by a community organization, building enrollment, and district enrollment. The two dependent variables were frequency of parental requests for help with parenting problems and educators' perceived ability to be helpful to parents.

## Questionnaire Development

A questionnaire was developed which listed and described twelve aspects of parenting. (The instrument is contained in Apendix A.) Educators were asked to indicated the number of times during a typical year parents would ask them for help with each of these twelve areas of parenting. They were also asked to check which one of the following three responses most accurately described their ability to be helpful with each concern: I can be helpful because I learned this in college, I can be helpful because I learned this primarily elsewhere, I can't be helpful until I learn more about this.

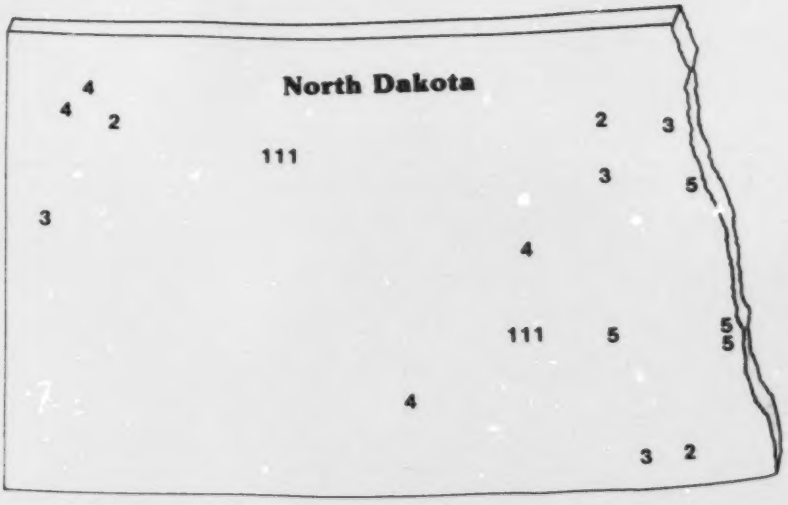
The questionnaire also solicited the educator's opinion about the proper role of the school in relating to parenting concerns. Demographic information was requested also.

## Sample Selection and Data Collection

A random sample of twenty-one North Dakota schools was selected using a table of random numbers. The sample was stratified by accreditation level and by public or private designation. (A map of the sample schools is located on the following page.)

North Dakota schools were assigned an accreditation level by the Department of Public Instruction. Several of the factors which influence the determination of the accreditation level are size of professional staff, size of student body, and resources which are available. Accreditation level 1 schools are generally the larger schools with the most resources.

One-room rural schools and private schools with fewer than




Map of Sample Schools

1 = Accreditation level 1 Schools
2 = Accreditation level 2 Schools
3 = Accreditation level 3 Schools
4 = Non-Accredited Schools
5 = Private Schools

Figure 1: Location of Schools in the Sample

three teachers were not included in the sample pool because of the small number of educators and students involved in these schools. Schools which were predominantly Native American were also excluded from the sample pool because of possible cultural differences which were not being measured but which might influence the responses.

Two accreditation level 1 public school districts were selected. One elementary, one middle or junior high school, and one senior high school were randomly selected from within each of these districts when more than one school existed in that category.

Three public schools from accreditation level 2, four from accreditation level 3, and four from the non-accredited public schools were also selected as part of the sample. Four schools with more than two teachers were randomly selected from all non-public schools in North Dakota. These were not stratified by academic level but were considered to be one category.

An administrator in each of the sample schools was asked if she/he would be willing to have the educators in that school answer the parenting questionnaire. All of the administrators agreed to participate in the study.

The researcher met with an administrator at each of the twenty-one schools and explained the purpose of the study, delivered the questionnaires, and provided instructions for the administration of the instrument. Each administrator was asked to have all educators present at a faculty meeting to be scheduled in the next few weeks complete the questionnaire as the administrator read the directions. Educators not present at the meeting were to

be eliminated from the sample.

Questionnaires were returned by all twenty-one school administrators. A total of 376 educators out of approximately 440 possible respondents completed the questionnaire.

## Profile of the Sample

A profile of the sample is found in table 1. The sample is described according to the number and percentage of responses in each category of the independent variables. The years of educational experience, building enrollment, and district enrollment data have been grouped to make them more readable, but the interval data were used in the statistical analysis.

## Frequency of Requests for Help with Parenting Problems

Figure 2 illustrates how many of the 376 respondents had each of the possible request-for-help scores between twelve and thirty-six. A score of twelve indicated that the educator was never asked for help with any of the twelve parenting concerns. A score of thirty-six indicated that the educator reported being frequently asked for help with each of the twelve parenting concerns. The mean frequency-of-request-for-help score was 18.75, which indicated that the most common response of educators was that they were sometimes asked for help with parenting problems.

Table 1

PROFILE OF SAMPLE

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Total Respondents | 376 | |
| School Category | N | % |
| accreditation level 1 | 179 | 48 |
| accreditation level 2 | 68 | 18 |
| accreditation level 3 | 61 | 16 |
| non-accredited | 28 | 7 |
| private | 40 | 11 |
| | 376 | 100 |
| Willingness of Educator to be Helpful to Parents with Concerns | | |
| willing | 219 | 58 |
| unwilling | 21 | 6 |
| uncertain | 81 | 22 |
| misinterpretation | 48 | 13 |
| | 369 | 99 |
| Sex of Educator | | |
| female | 208 | 55 |
| male | 168 | 45 |
| | 376 | 100 |
| Marital Status of Educators | | |
| married | 288 | 77 |
| single | 73 | 19 |
| separated/divorced | 11 | 3 |
| widowed | 4 | 1 |
| | 376 | 100 |
| Number of Children to Which Educator is a Parent | | |
| none | 125 | 33 |
| 1 | 49 | 13 |
| 2 | 95 | 25 |
| 3 | 62 | 17 |
| 4 | 25 | 7 |
| 5 | 11 | 3 |
| 6 or more | 9 | 2 |
| | 376 | 100 |
| School Position | | |
| teacher | 338 | 90 |
| counselor | 11 | 3 |
| administrator | 20 | 5 |
| librarian | 5 | 1 |
| | 374 | 99 |
| Subject Assignment | | |
| English | 21 | 6 |
| social studies | 20 | 5 |
| science | 19 | 5 |
| mathematics | 23 | 6 |
| vocational education | 34 | 9 |
| music/arts | 23 | 6 |
| special education | 25 | 7 |
| physical education | 9 | 2 |
| other assignments including elem. education | 170 | 45 |
| | 344 | 91 |

Table 1 (Cont.)

| | N | % |
|---|---|---|
| Years of Educational Experience | | |
| 1 or less | 17 | 5 |
| 2-5 | 80 | 20 |
| 6-10 | 103 | 27 |
| 11-20 | 97 | 26 |
| 21 or more | 73 | 20 |
| | 370 | 98 |
| Institution from Which Degree Was Received | | |
| University of North Dakota | 39 | 10 |
| North Dakota State University | 23 | 6 |
| Mayville State College | 33 | 9 |
| Valley City State College | 62 | 17 |
| Concordia College | 14 | 4 |
| Moorhead State University | 14 | 4 |
| Minot State College | 83 | 22 |
| Jamestown College | 24 | 6 |
| Dickinson State College | 14 | 4 |
| Other Institutions | 56 | 14 |
| | 362 | 96 |
| Parenting Classes Offered by the School | | |
| yes | 104 | 28 |
| no | 173 | 46 |
| uncertain | 97 | 26 |
| | 374 | 100 |
| Parenting Classes Offered by a Community Organization | | |
| yes | 191 | 51 |
| no | 75 | 20 |
| uncertain | 105 | 28 |
| | 371 | 99 |
| Building Enrollment | | |
| under 100 | 34 | 9 |
| 100-200 | 126 | 33 |
| 201-500 | 89 | 24 |
| 501-800 | 79 | 21 |
| 801-1200 | 48 | 13 |
| | 376 | 100 |
| District Enrollment | | |
| under 100 | 28 | 7 |
| 100-200 | 51 | 15 |
| 201-600 | 88 | 22 |
| 601-2000 | 13 | 3 |
| 2001-7000 | 96 | 26 |
| 7001-10,000 | 100 | 27 |
| | 376 | 100 |

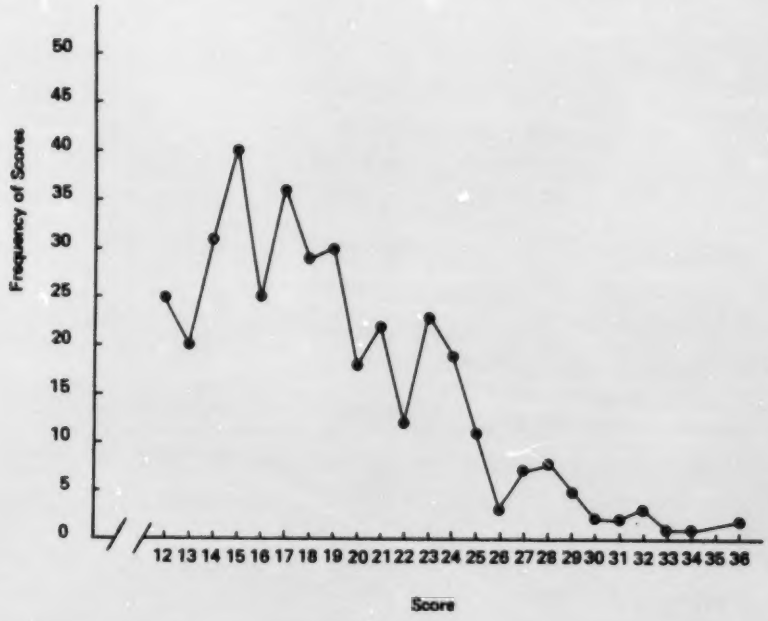



Figure 2. Distribution of Requests for Help Scores

## Statistical Analysis of the Frequency of Request-for-Help Mean Scores and the Findings

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) subprogram ONEWAY was used to determine if there was a significant difference between frequency-of-requests-for-help mean scores for each of the variable's groups. Significant differences were calculated for the following variables: (1) school category, (2) willingness of educators to be helpful to parents, (3) public or private school, (4) grade assignment, (5) school position, (6) subject assignment, (7) parenting classes offered by school, (8) parenting classes offered by a community organization (See table 2). The least significant difference test (LSD) was used to determine between which of the groups the significant difference occurred. If the difference between two means was greater than the LSD, a significant difference existed.

The SPSS subprogram SCATTERGRAM was used to determine the correlation between frequency of requests for help with parenting concerns and the number of years of professional experience, building enrollment, and district enrollment. There were no significant correlations between these variables.

### Frequency of requests for help with parenting concerns by School Category

The frequency of requests for help was highest in level 2 schools and lowest in the non-accredited schools. Private school educators had the second highest frequency for requests for help.

Table 2

VARIABLES WITH SIGNIFICANT AND NON-SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES IN FREQUENCY-OF-REQUEST-FOR-HELP MEAN SCORES

| Variables | Frequency of Requests for Help |
|---|---|
| School Category | x |
| Willingness of Educator to be Helpful to Parents | x |
| Sex of Educator | |
| Marital Status of Educator | |
| Number of Children Educator has as a Parent | |
| Public or Private School | x |
| Grade Assignment | x |
| School Position | x |
| Subject Assignment | x |
| Number of Years of Educational Experience | |
| Institution from which Degree was Received | |
| Parenting Classes Offered by School | x |
| Parenting Classes Offered by a Community Organization | x |
| Building Enrollment | |
| District Enrollment | |

x indicates a difference significant at 0.05

There was not a statistical difference in the number of requests for help between level 3 and non-accredited schools, level 1 and private schools, and level 2 and private schools.

Frequency of requests for help with parenting concerns by willingness of educators to be helpful to parents

There was a significant difference in the frequency of requests for help reported by educators who were willing to be helpful to parents and those who responded that this was not part of the educator's job. There was also a significant difference in the frequency of requests for help reported by educators who were willing to be helpful and those who were undecided about the appropriateness of this action.

Frequency of requests for help with parenting concerns by private or public school

Educators in private schools had significantly more requests for help than did educators in public schools. This information was corroborated in more detail when ONEWAY was used to determine whether or not a significant difference exists for schools in different categories.

Frequency of requests for help with parenting concerns by grade assignment

There was a significant difference between the frequency of

requests for help reported by educators in high schools and those assigned to grades four, five, and six. Educators in high schools reported fewer requests for help than any other grade assignment. Educators assigned to grade 6 had significantly more requests for help than did those with kindergarten through twelve assignments.

Frequency of requests for help with parenting concerns by school position

There was a significant difference in the frequency of requests made of counselors and librarians, counselors and teachers, and counselors and administrators. Help was requested from counselors more frequently than from those in the other three positions. Administrators also had significantly more requests for help than did teachers.

Frequency of requests for help with parenting concerns by subject assignment

Seven pairs of groups were significantly different at the 0.05 level when the LSD test was used. Special education teachers received significantly more frequent requests for help than did mathematics, social studies, English, music/arts, vocational, or science teachers. Elementary educators including educators with mixed assignments reported significantly more requests for help than did mathematics teachers.

Frequency of requests for help with parenting concerns by parenting class offered by the school

More requests for help were received from parents if the school had offered parenting classes than if it had not. There was also a significant difference in the frequency of requests from educators at schools where parenting classes were held and where educators were uncertain if parenting classes had been held.

Frequency of requests for help with parenting concerns by parenting class offered by a community organization

The most requests for help were reported by educators who taught in communities where parenting classes had been offered by a community organization. There was a significant difference in the number of requests for help with parenting concerns in communities where parenting classes had been held and where they had not been held. The same was true where parenting classes had been held and where respondents were uncertain whether or not parenting classes had been available.

The relationship between community parenting classes and the high frequency of requests for help from educators was not necessarily cause and effect. It is possible that the classes made parents more aware of the acceptability of asking questions about their concerns. It may also indicate that there was a strong desire for more parenting information in these communities and classes were offered for that reason. Both the number of requests and the parenting classes might have had a common origin.

## Statistical Analysis of the Ability-to-Be-Helpful Mean Scores and the Findings

Respondents were asked to check one of three columns which indicated how able they felt they could be to parents with each parenting concern. A score of three points was given when a respondent checked the "I can be helpful because I learned this primarily in college" column. Two points were given when the respondent checked the "I can be helpful because I learned this primarily elsewhere" column, and one point was given when the "I can't be helpful until I learn more about this" column was checked.

The highest possible score was 36, which indicated that the respondent felt able to be helpful with each of the twelve parenting concerns because these concerns had been studied in college. The lowest possible score was twelve. A score of twelve indicated that the respondent felt unable to be helpful with any of the twelve concerns until more had been learned in each area. The mean frequency of the ability-to-be-helpful scores was 25.81. An illustration of the distribution of the ability-to-be-helpful scores for the 376 respondents is included in figure 3.

The most popular response was, "I can be helpful because I learned this elsewhere". Few persons indicated that they were able to be helpful with all twelve concerns because they had learned about all of them in college. Even fewer respondents indicated that they couldn't be helpful with most of the concerns until they learned more about them.

## Statistical Analysis of the Ability-to-Be-Helpful Mean Scores and the Findings

The SPSS subprogram ONEWAY was used to determine if there was a significant difference between the frequency of the ability-to-be-helpful mean score and each of the variable's groups. Significant differences were discerned for the following variables: (1) willingness of educators to be helpful to parents, (2) school position, (3) parenting classes offered by a community organization, and (4) degree-awarding institution.

The SPSS subprogram SCATTERGRAM was used to determine the correlation between the ability-to-be-helpful scores and the number of years of professional experience, building enrollment, and district enrollment. A correlation coefficient of 0.15 (significant at .002) was calculated for the ability to be helpful and the number of years of professional experience.

The independent variables with and without significantly different ability-to-be-helpful mean scores are indicated in table 3. A brief description of these findings is found in the text which follows.

### Ability to be helpful by willingness of educator to be helpful

There was a significant difference between the ability to be helpful and the willingness of educators to be helpful to parents. The mean was significantly higher for those educators who were willing to be helpful and those who were uncertain whether or not this was a part of the educator's job. There was also a signifi-

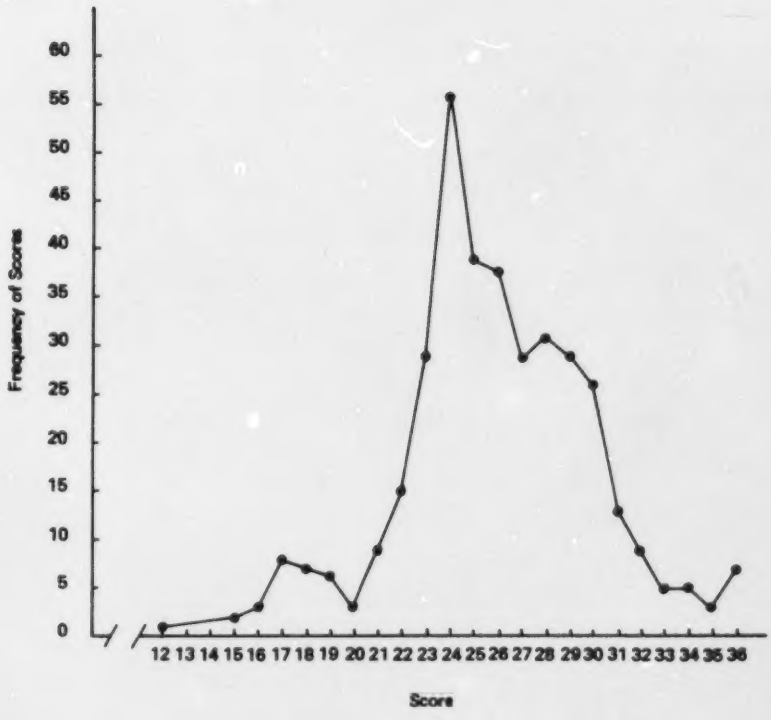



Figure 3. Distribution of Ability to be Helpful Scores

Table 3

Variables with Significant and Non-significant Differences in Ability-to-Be-Helpful Mean Scores

| Variables | Ability to be Helpful to Parents |
|---|---|
| School Category | |
| Willingness of Educator to be Helpful to Parents | x |
| Sex of Educator | |
| Marital Status of Educator | |
| Number of Children Educator has as a Parent | |
| Public or Private School | |
| Grade Assignment | |
| School Position | x |
| Subject Assignment | |
| Number of Years of Educational Experience | x |
| Degree-awarding Institution | x |
| Parenting Classes Offered by School | |
| Parenting Classes Offered by a Community Organization | x |
| Building Enrollment | |
| District Enrollment | |

x indiates a difference significant at 0.05

cant difference in the ability to be helpful between educators who reported that assisting parents was part of their job and those who appeared to have misinterpreted the open-ended question which was concerned with their willingness to help parents with their concerns.

Ability to be helpful by school position

There was a significant difference in the ability to be helpful reported between counselors and teachers and between counselors and administrators. Counselors reported that they were able to assist parents more frequently than did administrators, teachers, or librarians.

Ability-to-be-helpful scores correlated with number of years of educational experience

The SPSS subprogram SCATTERGRAM indicated an r of -0.15 between the total ability-to-be-helpful scores and the number of years of educational experience. This was significant at the 0.002 level.

The negative correlation indicated that those with little experience checked column 3 (they were able to be helpful because they learned about this concern in school) more frequently than did those with many years of experience. Those with considerable experience were likely to indicate that they could be helpful because they had learned the necessary information elsewhere. Only one composite ability-to-be-helpful score was less than 13. This

indicated that almost all persons checked that they were able to be helpful. It was the source of their information -- college classes or elsewhere -- which correlated with experience.

These results could indicate that more time is spent on concerns that parents may ask about in college classes today than in years past. It could also suggest that people are remembering best what they have learned from their most recent formal educational experiences rather than from classes held some years ago. Also, persons with many years of experience have had more opportunities from which to learn than have educators who are just beginning their professional activities.

Ability to be helpful by institution from which the degree was received

There was a significant difference in the ability to be helpful by institution from which the degree was received. The LSD test indicated the significant difference existed between North Dakota State University (NDSU) and (1) Mayville State College, (2) Concordia College, (3) Minot State College, (4) Jamestown College, (5) all other institutions, (6) University of North Dakota, and (7) Valley City State College Educators at North Dakota State University had a higher mean ability-to-be-helpful score than did educators at the other institutions listed. This indicated that NDSU graduates were more likely than other graduates to report that they were able to be helpful because they had learned about

the concerns in college classes.

There was also a significant difference in mean ability-to-be-helpful score from graduates of Valley City and Mayville. Valley City graduates more frequently checked that they were able to be helpful because they learned about the concern in college than were graduates of Mayville.

The scope of this study didn't provide an explanation for the difference in scores. Further study could seek an answer by comparing course curricula at each of the institutions. The differences could be a result of the school positions held by graduates of the different institutions.

Counselors had high scores. If many of the counselors in this sample are NDSU graduates this would be reflected in the scores for the institution. Other unidentified factors may also be influencing the ability-to-be-helpful scores.

Ability to be helpful by parenting classes offered by a community organization

There was a significant difference in the perceived ability to be helpful by educators in communities where parenting classes had been held and those where no parenting classes had been held. The mean ability-to-be-helpful score was higher in communities where parenting classes had been offered.

The reasons for these differences were not provided by the statistical analysis, of course, but two possible explanations may be that (1) the educators attended the parenting classes and this increased their ability to be helpful or (2) that parents in these

communities had asked educators for help and the educators had learned through doing and gained confidence in their ability to be helpful.

## Analysis of the Frequency-of-Request-for-Help Scores for Each of the Twelve Parenting Concerns

The researcher was interested in finding out which of the twelve parenting concerns educators were being asked for help with by parents. Table 4 reports the percentage of responses from educators in the combined "sometimes" and "frequently" categories. The parenting concerns are ranked from those generating the most frequent to the least frequent questions.

The chi-square test was used to determine if there was a significant difference between (1) the frequency of requests for help with each of the individual parenting concerns and (2) each of the independent variables except years of educational experience, building enrollment, and district enrollment. Any chi-square values which were at the 0.05 level were determined to be significant. Table 5 indicates which pairs of variables were significantly different.

One-way analysis of variance was used to determine if there was a significant difference between the frequency of requests for help with each of the individual parenting concerns and (1) number of years of educational experience, (2) building enrollment, and (3) district enrollment. An F-Value was considered to be significant if it was at the 0.05 level.

The significant differences which existed for each parenting

Table 4

Ranking of Parenting Concerns by Frequency of Requests for Help

| Rank | Parenting Concern | % Combined Sometimes and Frequently Categories |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Stimulating Intellectual Development | 81 |
| 2 | Developing Effective Discipline Techniques | 61 |
| 3 | Setting Realistic Expectations | 60 |
| 4 | Recognizing Deviant Development and Appropriate Sources of Help | 58 |
| 4 | Building Children's Self-Esteem | 58 |
| 6. | Guiding Children's Social Development | 48 |
| 7. | Improving Human Interaction Through Good Communication Skills | 41 |
| 8. | Assisting Children's Emotional Development | 40 |
| 9. | Assisting in the Development of a Value System | 38 |
| 10. | Promoting Moral Development | 33 |
| 11. | Selecting Safe and Stimulaing Play Objects and Activities | 28 |
| 12. | Providing for the Physical Needs of Children | 26 |

concern and each of the independent variables are indicated in table 5. A brief discussion of the findings related to each of the independent variables is included in the following paragraphs.

School category and parenting concerns

Chi-square tests indicated that there was a significant difference between school categories and ten of the twelve parenting concerns. The two exceptions were stimulating intellectual development and providing for the physical needs of children.

Educators in accreditation level 2 schools reported the most frequent requests for help with these seven concerns: developing effective discipline techniques, guiding children's social development, promoting moral development, assisting children's emotional development, improving human interaction through good communication, assisting in the development of a value system, and selecting safe and stimulating play objects and activities. Accreditation level 1 educators reported the second most frequent requests for help relating to the development of a value system. Educators in private schools had the second most frequent requests for help from parents with each of the other six concerns.

Educators in private schools reported the highest frequency-of-request-for-help scores relating to building children's self-esteem, setting realistic expectations, and recognizing deviant development and appropriate sources of help. Educators in accreditation level 2 schools had the second highest frequency-of-request-for-help scores for each of these three concerns. Educators in the non-accredited schools were asked for help with each

Table 5

Variables with Significant and Non-significant Differences in Frequency of Requests for Help

| | School Category | Willingness to be Helpful | Sex of Educator | Marital Status of Educator | Number of Children | Public or Private School | Grade Assignment | School Position | Subject Assignment | Number of Years of Experience | Degree-granting Institution | Parenting Classes--School | Parenting Classes--Community | Building Enrollment | District Enrollment |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Discipline Techniques | x | | x | | | | | x | | | | x | x | | |
| Self-esteem | x | | | | | | | x | | | | | x | | |
| Social Development | x | x | x | | | x | x | x | | | | x | x | x | |
| Intellectual Development | | | | | | | x | x | | | | | x | | |
| Moral Development | x | x | | | | | | x | | | | | x | | |
| Emotional Development | x | x | x | | | | | x | | | | | x | | |
| Realistic Expectations | x | | | | | x | x | x | | | | | x | | |
| Deviant Development | x | | x | | | | x | x | x | | | x | x | | |
| Physical Needs | | | x | | | | | x | x | | | | | | |
| Communication Skills | x | | x | | | | | x | | | | | x | | |
| Value System | x | | x | | | | x | x | | x | | | | | |
| Selecting Play Objects and Activities | x | | x | | | | x | | x | | | | | x | |

x indicates a difference significant at 0.05

concern less frequently than were educators in any other category.

Willingness of educators to be helpful and parenting concerns

Chi-square tests indicated that there was a significant difference between the willingness of educators to be helpful and three parenting concerns--guiding children's social development, promoting moral development, and assisting children's emotional development. In each of these cases, educators who reported being willing to help parents with parenting concerns reported being asked for help much more frequently than did those educators who were not receptive to assuming this task.

Sex of the educator and parenting concerns

Eight of the parenting concerns had significantly different scores for males and females. These were: developing effective discipline techniques, guiding children's social development and appropriate sources of help, providing for the physical needs of children, improving human interaction through development of a value system, and selecting safe and stimulating play objects and activities.

Females reported more frequent requests for help related to discipline techniques; social, emotional, and deviant development and appropriate sources of help; and selecting play objects and activities. Males reported more frequent requests for help with concerns related to physical needs, communication skills, and the development of a value system.

Parents may be even more likely to choose females rather than males as a source of help than these findings indicate, however, because parents tended to ask counselors and administrators for help much more frequently than they asked teachers and librarians. In this study the majority of both the counselors and the administrators were males.

Marital status of educators and parenting concerns

There were no significant relationships between the marital status of educators and any of the twelve parenting concerns. This non-school-related variable appeared not to influence parents' selection from whom to request help with parenting concerns.

Number of children and parenting concerns

Whether or not the educator was a parent did not appear to influence the parents' choice of who to go to for help. There were no significant differences between this variable and any of the twelve parenting concerns.

Public and private school and parenting concerns

When the frequency-of-request-for-help scores of all educators in public schools were analyzed for differences with those of the educators in private schools significant differences were in-

dicated between this independent variable and two parenting concerns: guiding children's social development and setting realistic expectations. Educators in private schools had considerably more requests for help with both of these parenting concerns than did public school educators.

Grade assignment and parenting concerns

Six of the parenting concerns had significantly different scores when analyzed by grade assignment of educators. Parents of children in grades three through five sought help with social development the most frequently and parents of senior high students the least frequently.

Educators reported receiving more requests related to stimulating intellectual development than about any other concern. Every educator assigned to the third grade reported being asked about this concern. Educators assigned to fourth and fifth grades also reported being asked for help with this concern very frequently. In fact, at least seventy-five percent of the educators with every grade assignment reported being asked questions about stimulating intellectual development.

Educators with kindergarten through sixth grade assignments reported receiving more frequent questions from parents related to the setting of realistic expectations than did educators of older students. These same educators reported receiving the most questions about recognizing deviant development and appropriated sources of help.

Parents tended not to ask educators assigned to the primary

grades about the development of a value system. Educators with fourth grade assignments reported being asked about this more often than did educators with other assignments. Educators assigned to sixth and seventh grades were frequently asked for help with this concern, too.

There was also a significant difference in the frequency of requests for help to select safe and stimulating play objects and activities and grade assignment. Few educators at the junior and senior high levels reported being asked for help with this concern. Educators with kindergarten through grade two assignments reported being asked for help with this concern most often.

School position and parenting concerns

There were significant differences in the frequency-of-request-for-help scores and all parenting concerns except for the selection of play objects and activities. Counselors were asked for help with each of these eleven concerns much more often than were educators with other assignments. Administrators tended to be selected as the source of help more often than teachers or librarians.

Subject assignment and parenting concerns

Significant differences existed between the frequency-of-request-for-help scores reported for recognizing deviant development and appropriate sources of help, providing for the physical needs of children, and selecting play objects and activities and

the subject assignment of educators. Educators with special education assignments reported receiving the most frequent requests for help with this concern. Educators with elementary assignments reported the next highest number of requests of help.

Parents tended to ask physical education teachers for help when they had concerns about physical development. Special education and physical education educators were asked for help with questions related to the selection of play objects and activities more often than were educators with other assignments.

Number of years of educational experience and parenting concerns

The only parenting concern which was significantly different by years of educational experience was that which was concerned with the development of a value system. Those who reported the most requests for help with values development had the most years of educational experience. Parents chose to get help with this concern from persons who were not just out of college but who were more mature.

Degree-granting institution and parenting concerns

No significant differences existed between this independent variable and any of the twelve parenting concerns. Parents did not seek help from educators because of the educational institution from which the educator had graduated.

Parenting classes and parenting concerns

Parents asked educators for help with nine of the twelve parenting concerns more frequently when parenting classes had been offered either by the school district or by a community organization than when the classes had not been offered. These nine concerns about which more questions were asked were: developing effective discipline techniques, building children's self-esteem, guiding children's social development, stimulating intellectual development, promoting moral development, assisting children's emotional development, setting realistic expectations, recognizing deviant development and appropriate sources of help, and improving human interaction through good communication. In no instances did educators get fewer requests for help after parenting classes had been offered.

Building enrollment and parenting concerns

There was a significant difference in building enrollment and the frequency-of-requests-for-help with social development and the selection of play objects and activities. Educators employed in the middle-sized schools had the most requests for help with both of these concerns. Educators assigned to the largest schools were seldom asked about either of these concerns.

Requests for help in areas other than the twelve concerns

Educators were asked to indicate areas other than the twelve parenting concerns for which parents came to them with questions.

Educators reported that parents asked them questions about the following concerns:

obtaining financing for post-secondary education

choosing an appropriate musical instrument to play or composition to perform

controlling drinking, smoking, and drugs

handling peer pressure

setting vocational goals

improving reading skills

improving attitude toward school

teaching sex education

controlling weight

influencing dating

helping child to cope with divorce

setting TV viewing limits

helping child cope with death

helping child develop study habits

meeting needs of gifted and talented children

assisting child to fit into junior high social system without rejecting home values

establishing worthwhile summer programs

Educators not only had received requests for help, as evidenced by this list, but the requests were important enough to be remembered. Some of the items from this list could be included in the original twelve concerns, but others are concerns which the questionnaire did not address.

## Analysis of the Differences Between the Ability to be Helpful with Each Parenting Concern and Each of the Independent Variables

Educators were asked to indicate how able they were to be helpful to parents with each of the twelve parenting concerns by checking one of the following three categories:

(1) I can't be helpful until I learn more about this

(2) I can be helpful because I learned this primarily elsewhere

(3) I can be helpful because I learned this primarily in college

The percentage of educators who indicated that they were able to be helpful to parents with each concern is reported in table 6. The concerns are ranked from the one which educators perceived themselves to be able to be the most helpful to the one which educators perceived themselves to be least helpful to parents.

Over half of the responding educators reported that they were able to be helpful in the area of stimulating intellectual development because they had learned about this concern in college. For only two other concerns did more educators report college rather than "elsewhere" as the source of the information. These were setting realistic expectations, and recognizing deviant development and appropriate source of help.

Over seventy percent of the educators reported learning about moral development and discipline techniques someplace other than in college classes. Experience, personal reading, or non-college classes may be possible sources of information about moral development and discipline techniques.

Table 6

RANKING OF PARENTING CONCERNS BY ABILITY OF EDUCATORS TO BE HELPFUL

| Rank | Parenting Concern | % Combined Helpful Categories |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Stimulating Intellectual Development | 97 |
| 1 | Building Children's Self-Esteem | 97 |
| 3 | Developing Effective Discipline Techniques | 95 |
| 4 | Guiding Children's Social Development | 90 |
| 4 | Promoting Moral Development | 90 |
| 6 | Setting Realistic Expectations | 88 |
| 7 | Improving Human Interaction through Good Communication | 86 |
| 7 | Providing for the Physical Needs of Children | 86 |
| 9. | Assisting Children's Emotional Development | 84 |
| 10. | Recognizing Deviant Development Appropriate Sources of Help | 83 |
| 11. | Assisting in the Development of a Value System | 81 |
| 12. | Selecting Safe and Stimulating Play Objects and Activities | 76 |

The parenting concerns with the highest percentage of responses in the "I can't be helpful until I learn more about this" category were (1) selecting safe and stimulating play objects and activities, and (2) assisting in the development of a value system. Very few educators reported being asked for help with either of these two concerns, however.

The researcher has some questions about accuracy of the ability-to-be-helpful responses because of comments written by many educators when they were responding to an open-ended question which was soliciting information about their attitudes toward helping parents. A number of educators stated that they thought it would be appropriate to help parents who had questions about parenting concerns but they did not feel they knew enough about the concerns to be helpful. Perhaps the educators felt less able to be helpful when they were thinking of applying the information than when they were evaluating their general information on each concern.

The chi-square test was used to determine if there was a significant difference between the ability-to-be-helpful scores for each parenting concern and each of the independent variables except for (1) number of years of educational experience, (2) building enrollment, and (3) district enrollment. The statistical test used in these instances was the one-way analysis of variance. The level at which significance was declared was 0.05. The parenting concerns and independent variables with significant and non-significant ability-to-be-helpful scores are indicated in table 7.

A brief discussion about the significant differences is pro-

vided in the following paragraphs.

School category and parenting concerns

The ability-to-be-helpful scores were significantly different for two parenting concerns--assisting in the development of a value system and selecting play objects and activities--when analyzed by school category.

Level 2 and private schools had the smallest percentage of educators who reported they were unable to be helpful to parents in the development of a value system by their children. Level 1 educators had the highest percentage of educators who reported learning about the development of a value system in college. Educators generally reported learning about this concern somewhere other than in their formal classes. Private school educators reported the highest percentage of "able-elsewhere" responses. The private schools in this study were all church-owned so it is likely that the private school educators' source of information on the development of a value system was church-related.

Almost three-fourths of all educators reported being unable to be helpful to parents with the selection of play objects and activities. Educators in level 2 and private schools had the highest percentage of educators who indicated that they could be helpful to parents with this concern.

Willingness to be helpful to parents and parenting concerns

There was a significant difference between the willingness

Table 7

VARIABLES WITH SIGNIFICANT AND NON-SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES IN ABILITY-TO-BE-HELPFUL SCORES

| | School Category | Willingness to be Helpful | Sex of Educator | Marital Status of Educator | Number of Children | Public or Private School | Grade Assignment | School Position | Subject Assignment | Number of Years of Experience | Degree-granting Institution | Parenting Classes--School | Parenting Classes--Community | Building Enrollment | District Enrollment |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Discipline Techniques | | | | | | | | x | | x | | x | | | |
| Self-esteem | | | | | | | | x | | x | | | | | |
| Social Development | | x | | | | | | x | x | | | | | | |
| Intellectual Development | | | x | | | | | | | x | | | | | |
| Moral Development | | | | | | | | x | | | | | | | |
| Emotional Development | | | | | | | | x | | | x | | x | | |
| Realistic Expectations | | | | | | | | | | x | | | x | | |
| Deviant Development | | x | x | | | | | x | | | | | x | | |
| Physical Needs | | x | | | | | | | x | | x | x | x | | |
| Communication Skills | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Value System | x | | | | | | | x | x | | x | | | x | |
| Selecting Play Objects and Activities | x | | | x | | | x | | x | x | | x | x | x | |

x indicates a difference significant at 0.05

of educators to be helpful to parents and guiding children's social development, recognizing deviant development and appropriate sources of help, and providing for the physical needs of children. The majority of educators were willing to be helpful to parents with this concern and reported learning about it someplace other than in college classes. Those who indicated it was not the educator's job to be helpful to parents were more likely to report they were able to be helpful because they learned about social development in college than were educators who were willing to be helpful or were uncertain if they wished to be helpful.

Educators who indicated a willingness to be helpful to parents in recognizing deviant development were also likely to report themselves as able to be helpful. Those who indicated that helping parents was not a part of the educator's job were likely to report that they were not able to be helpful until they learned more about the concern. Almost half of all educators reported that they were able to be helpful because they had learned about this concern in college. Informal learning experiences did not appear to be as common a source of information about deviant development as was the case with some other concerns.

The majority of educators reported being willing to help parents learn how to provide for the physical needs of children. They also reported that they were able because they had learned about physical needs of children someplace other than in college. I found it interesting that all educators who reported that they were not willing to be helpful with this concern perceived themselves to be able to be helpful, however.

Sex of educator and parenting concerns

Female educators were not only more likely than males to report that they were able to be helpful to parents with the stimulating intellectual development concern but that they had learned about the concern in college. In general, however, educators reported more confidence in their ability to be helpful to parents in stimulating intellectual development than with any other concern.

Females were also more likely than males to report being able to be helpful to parents with the recognition of deviant development and appropriate sources of help. More females indicated learning about this concern in college than did males, also.

Marital status of educator and parenting concerns

A significant difference existed between marital status of educators and the selection of play objects and activities. Married educators were more likely to indicate that they could be helpful to parents with this concern than were single educators. They learned about the concern someplace other than in college courses.

Grade assignment and parenting concerns

Selecting play objects and activities was the only parenting concern with significantly different ability-to-be-helpful scores by grade assignment. Educators with kindergarten through grade

five assignments were more able to be helpful with this concern than were educators assigned to older students. Educators with kindergarten and first grade assignments reported learning about this concern in college classes more frequently than did educators with other assignments.

School position and parenting concerns

Significant differences existed between the ability-to-be-helpful scores for seven of the parenting concerns and the school position of the educators. All counselors reported being able to help parents establish discipline techniques; build children's self-esteem; guide social, moral, and emotional development; recognize deviant development; and assist in the development of a value system. An overwhelming majority of counselors reported learning about all of these concerns except for moral development in college.

All administrators reported being able to be helpful with discipline techniques, as well as esteem, social, and moral development. However, they reported learning about these concerns someplace other than in college classes.

Most teachers reported that they could be helpful to parents with these seven concerns but the majority of them reported that they learned about them someplace other than college classes. All librarians reported being able to be helpful to parents who had questions about deviant development because they had learned about this concern in college.

Subject assignment and parenting concerns

All educators with vocational education and special education assignments indicated that they were able to be helpful with the social development concern. One-fourth of these educators had learned about social development in college and the rest had learned about the topic someplace else.

All physical education teachers reported being able to answer parents' questions about physical needs of children. Vocational education and physical education educators were most likely to report that they were able because they had learned about this concern in college. Special education educators had the highest percentage of respondents in the "able to be helpful because I learned it elsewhere" category.

All physical education teachers perceived that they were able to help parents with concerns about the development of a value system and the selection of play objects and activities, also. The majority of these educators had studied about the selection of play objects and activities in college classes, but information about values tended to have been learned elsewhere.

Number of years of educational experience and parenting concerns

The educators who reported that they were able to be helpful to parents with concerns related to discipline techniques, self-esteem, intellectual development, setting realistic expectations, and selecting play objects and activities had fewer years of educational experience than did those who were able to be helpful

because they had learned about the concerns someplace other than in college or those who did not feel able to be helpful. A change in the curriculum at teacher education institutions is suggested by these findings.

Degree-granting institutions and parenting concerns

All Dickinson State College graduates reported being able to be helpful to parents with emotional development concerns and half of these educators indicated that they had learned about emotional development in college. Over half of the graduates of North Dakota State University reported learning about this concern in college. Most Moorhead State University graduates in the sample reported being able to be helpful but only seven percent reported learning about the subject in college.

North Dakota State University was the only institution with a high percentage of graduates who indicated that they had learned about the physical needs of children in college classes. North Dakota State University had a high number of vocational education graduates and they reported learning about physical needs in college. Graduates of this institution were also more likely than graduates from other institutions to report that they were able to be helpful with values development because they had learned about it in college. Education students in different colleges and universities apparently have had different learning experiences.

Parenting classes and parenting concerns

Educators who felt able to be helpful to parents and the availability of parenting classes in the community or school district go hand in hand. At least, this appears to be true for the concerns related to discipline techniques, emotional development, setting realistic expectations, recognizing deviant development, providing for the physical needs, and selecting play objects and activities. The findings from this study did not provide a reason for this relationship. It is possible that the teachers felt more able because they, too, learned from the parenting classes or that the teachers who felt able to be helpful to parents promoted the parenting classes.

## Willingness of Educators to Be Helpful to Parents

Helping parents develop parenting skills is not likely to be a part of any educator's contract. Since it is not a task they are required to do it seemed important to determine what educators' opinions were regarding helping parents with their parenting concerns. Just because parents have reported that they would first seek help from educators when they have parenting problems does not mean that the educators would welcome this additional responsibility. In an open-ended question on the questionnaire respondents were asked their opinions about the proper role of the school in relating to parenting concerns. They were asked if helping parents with their concerns was part of the educator's job and if they were willing to be helpful to parents. Thirteen per-

cent of the respondents appeared to misinterpret the question. Their responses suggested that they interpreted the question to be whether or not they would be willing to parent the children rather than if they would be willing to help parents learn how to become better parents. One respondent indicated that he would be willing to parent if parents would be willing to teach.

Fifty-eight percent of the respondents indicated that they would be willing to help parents with their parenting concerns, especially if the problem affected school achievement or school behavior. The student's home life was reported as being an important factor in the student's school performance so it was felt that helping the parents might make a big difference in the child's educational development. The child was expected to benefit when all worked together.

Some respondents suggested that the educator should recognize his limitations and make referrals when he did not feel able to be helpful. Others stated that it was something educators should be willing to do but they, personally, did not know enough about the parenting concerns to be helpful. This response was given frequently even though the individuals just had checked columns indicating that they were able to be helpful because the concerns had been learned in college or elsewhere.

A number of respondents commented that the schools must support the parents in their efforts to rear children and the parents must support the educators in their efforts to teach children. Many educators indicated a willingness to work with concerned parents. The ideal situation would be for parents and teachers to share concerns, according to several educators.

Twenty-three percent of the educators had reservations about the role educators should play in helping parents. Some hesitated because they did not want to intrude into family affairs, others because they had no time for additional responsibility.

A number of educators suggested that parenting classes be offered through the school district. This would provide parents the opportunity to have their questions about parenting concerns answered without adding to the work load of educators. Other respondents stated that educators were not experts in the area of parenting so parents may get better information by attending classes taught by knowledgeable persons than by seeking help from many educators. One educator wrote that the family unit had changed so much since he started teaching that he needed to learn more about the family and its concerns, also.

Several educators suggested that a partial solution to the problem of parents being unprepared for their role was to offer classes on parenting to high school students. The students would then be prepared for their future roles as adults. Another educator wrote, almost as if in response, that, although parenting classes for high school students may be a suggested solution to the problem, students would be unlikely to remember enough information or solutions to problems they were not yet experiencing to eliminate the need for further help when they actually became parents.

Only six percent stated that helping parents with their parenting concerns was not part of the educator's job. Some wrote that teachers weren't able to be helpful with many of the concerns. Others said they were tired of having parents "dump"

their responsibilities on educators.

## CHAPTER 3

## CONCLUSIONS

Findings from the study permit the following conclusions:

1. Parents of North Dakota school children do ask educators for help with parenting concerns.

2. Some parenting concerns (such as stimulating intellectual development) generated many more questions from parents than did others (such as physical development).

3. Educators reported being able to be helpful with the parenting concerns about which they most frequently were asked, with one exception. Recognizing deviant development and appropriate sources of help was ranked fourth in frequency of requests for help and tenth in ability to be helpful.

4. The independent variables which had significant differences in the frequency of requests for help tended to be school-related variables such as school position rather than non-school-related such as marital status or number of children one has as a parent.

5. Educational background is an important factor in educators' perceptions of their ability to be helpful. Three of the five ability-to-be-helpful scores with significant differences were related to the educational preparation:

school position--the formal educational experiences of counselors appeared to have influenced their perception of their ability to be helpful with most of the parenting concerns.

number of years of educational experience--recent graduates reported college classes as their information source more frequently than did persons who had been teaching for a number of years.

degree-awarding institution--graduates of some institutions reported being able to be helpful because the concerns had been learned in college. Graduates of other institutions reported learning about few of the concerns in college classes.

6. The number of parenting questions parents asked educators increased after parenting classes had been offered in the community. Parenting classes may be very helpful to parents but should not be offered to reduce the number of questions parents wish to ask of educators. In fact, the number of questions can be expected to increase rather than decrease with the availability of parenting classes.

7. The sex of the educator appears to be related to the concerns about which parents ask educators. Females reported being asked questions about discipline techniques, social development, emotional development, deviant development, and selecting play objects and activities more frequently than males. Males were asked more frequently about developing communication skills, physical needs, and the development of a value system. The differences in requests by the sex of the educator may be greater

than the data report because the majority of counselors and administrators were males, and persons in these two positions received more requests for help than did teachers or librarians. Parents may more frequently seek help from female teachers than the data suggest.

8. The willingness to help parents with parenting concerns will influence the number of requests for help an educator receives. Educators who indicated that they were willing to help received requests for help more frequently than did educators who were not willing to be helpful.

9. Some characteristics, other than enrollment, appear to be influencing the frequency of requests for help as determined by school category. Educators in accreditation level 2, followed by private schools, consistently had more requests for help than did educators in schools at other accreditation levels.

10. Parents most frequently sought help from counselors. Administrators received the second most frequent number of requests for help with parenting concerns.

11. The subject assignment influenced the frequency of requests for help only when the request for help was clearly related to the subject assignment. For example, special education educators reported receiving the highest number of requests for help recognizing deviant development; physical education teachers received the most frequent requests for help with providing for the physical needs of children; and, elementary teachers received the most frequent requests for help with selecting safe and stimulating play objects and activities.

12. The number of years of educational experience did not

appear to influence the selection of the source of help by parents except when parents had questions about the development of a value system. Educators with more years of experience reported more frequent requests for help with the development of a value system than did more recent graduates.

13. The institution from which the educator's degree was received did not appear to be a factor which influenced parents' selection of the source of help.

14. There appear to be at least some differences by institution in the curricula required for educational degrees. The degree-granting institution was related to the educators' perceptions of their ability to be helpful and the source of their information about emotional development, physical needs of children, and the development of a value system.

15. The size of the school or school district did not appear to be a major factor which determined whether or not parents would seek help with parenting problems.

16. Parents of children at different grade levels indicated different concerns by the frequency of their requests for help. Parents of children in the lower grades had different concerns than did parents of upper grade children.

## CHAPTER 4

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Two policy recommendations are made as a result of this study.

1. College education department personnel should accept the responsibility for providing future educators with information related to parenting concerns so that the educators will be prepared to be helpful.

2. Public school administrators should arrange opportunities for practicing educators to learn about parenting concerns so educators with years of professional experience will be prepared to help parents with their parenting questions.

Several practices relating to providing parents with helpful parenting information are recommended as a result of this study.

1. Administrators at the local level should use an instrument similar to the one used in this study to identify concerns for which parents frequently ask for help but for which educators report they are unable to be helpful. Inservice classes could then be offered to teach educators about the concerns for which parents are requesting help. This may be particularly important in schools without counseling positions.

2. Inservice classes should be designed to acquaint teachers

with answers to the specific concerns asked by parents of children similar in age to their grade assignment. For example, teachers with grades 4-6 assignments reported receiving more frequent questions about social and intellectual development than did teachers of younger or older students. Classes which provide information about social and intellectual development as it relates specifically to children in grades 4-6 would be helpful to these educators.

3. Parenting classes could be offered through the school district to stimulate parents to ask questions. Administrators at the local level could arrange for parenting classes to be offered through the school district if they conclude that parents in the school district appear to need/want information about a particular parenting concern. Parents tend to ask more questions after parenting classes have been offered, so offering a class may encourage parents to seek answers to their questions.

4. College programs which prepare educators for various kinds of certification should include information about parenting concerns in required courses. It is particularly important that the concerns which receive frequent requests for help, such as developing discipline technique and recognizing deviant development, are included in course work.

5. Education courses which are frequently used for recertification purposes by teachers who have been in the classroom for a number of years should include information about discipline techniques, development of self-esteem, intellectual development, and setting realistic expectations. Educators with more years of experience reported being less able to be helpful with these con-

cerns than did more recent education graduates. These topics may not have been included in education courses in earlier years, additional information may now be available, or educators may have forgotten some information with the passing of time.

6. Teacher education, educational administration, and counseling program personnel should expect changes in the concerns which generate questions. In fact, they should attemp to anticipate the changes by observing changes in society.

The following recommendations for further study are made as a result of findings from this study.

1. Parents of children in grades four, five, and six appear to have parenting concerns which are different from those of parents of children at other grade levels. A study to determine their special questions and the ways in which educators could be helpful with these concerns may be beneficial to parents, educators, and students.

2. Educators who reported being unable to be helpful to parents with discipline concerns had the most years of educational experience. Further study should attempt to identify reasons for this finding and determine what methods would/could be successfully used to teach practicing educators about discipline techniques.

3. School/community characteristics which influence the frequency of requests for help should be identified through further study. Some characteristics other than size or enrollment appeared to influence the frequency of requests for help. School category was predictive of differences in requests for help except with the intellectual development and physical needs con-

cerns. Accreditation level 2 educators consistently reported the highest frequency of request for each concern, followed by the educators in private schools, with one exception. Level 1 educators reported the second highest frequency of requests for help with the development of a value system. The non-accredited schools consistently had the fewest requests for help. If, through further study, the characteristics which influenced the frequency of requests for help could be identified, these characteristics could help determine the relationship between the frequency of requests for help and needs of parents. It is possible for a situation to be characterized by high need and few requests for help, for example. Do parents in non-accredited school districts really have fewer concerns, are they not seeking answers to their questions, or do they have another source of help for their parenting concerns?

4. A further study should compare the understanding and accuracy of information of those who learned about a concern in college and those who learned about it elsewhere. Does each source of information provide equally accurate information? Do college courses and education through experience prepare educators to be equally able to be helpful to parents with parenting concerns? Are some concerns learned best in one setting and other concerns in another setting?

5. The curricula in colleges of education should be examined to identify which parenting concerns are being taught. A comparison could then be made between the course offerings and the educators' perceptions of their ability to be helpful.

6. Further studies could identify more specific information

about the parents who are asking the questions, such as the following:

Do mothers or fathers more frequently seek help for parenting problems?

Do fathers and mothers differ in the frequency of their requests for help by children's age?

Do single parents ask more or fewer questions than parents who have a marital partner?

Does the sex of the child influence the frequency of parental requests for help?

Do mothers/fathers tend to seek help from an educator of the same or opposite sex?

7. Further study should identify the source of administrators' information about parenting concerns. Administrators tended to report being able to be helpful because they had learned about the concern someplace other than in college more frequently than did teachers. Perhaps teachers could get information from these same sources if the sources of information could be identified.

8. Further study should determine the relationship between the willingness of the educator to be helpful to parents related to the size of the school, the grade level assignment, and the school position.

One cannot be involved in a project such as this without developing some personal opinions. The findings of the data analysis and information gleaned from the related literature have convinced the researcher that parents, students, and educators would all benefit from the intentional inclusion of infor-

mation about most of the twelve parenting concerns in required classes for educators and in-service training classes for practicing educators. Parents, also, could be expected to benefit from parenting classes because of an increase in their parenting skills and increased confidence in their ability to parent.

Attitudes of parents toward public schools can certainly be expected to be more positive if they perceive educators to be helpful allies rather than antagonists. If educators are able to give parents help when they seek parenting advice, positive feelings are likely to develop or to continue, as the case may be. Children's attitudes toward school are generally influenced by those of their parents. More positive student attitudes toward school may be reflected in increased grades and reduced absenteeism.

The data reflect a positive evaluation by parents of the educational system. At a time when the "back to the basics" movement is receiving considerable attention parents are still turning to school personnel for personal help. For the most part, educators are willing to give whatever assistance they feel qualified to provide. This willingness to be helpful reflects positively on the educators, too, because helping parents with their concerns probably exceeds the specifics of all contracts.

Even though educators indicated a willingness to be helpful, it seems important that the public's expectations of educators do not exceed educators' preparation. If helping parents is an expectation of educators, then, education classes should be structured to help educators meet these expectations.

These contacts between educators and parents could be very influential in the improvement of home-school relationships. This, in itself, is a worthy result.

# APPENDIX A
# QUESTIONNAIRE

How frequently during a typical year do parents ask you for help with each concern listed?

Which answer best describes your ability to be helpful?

| | 1 Rarely - almost never, 0 times yearly | 2 Sometimes 1-5 times yearly | 3 Frequently 6 or more times yearly | Parenting Concerns | 3 I can be helpful because I learned this primarily in college. | 2 I can be helpful because I learned this primarily elsewhere. | 1 I can't be helpful until I learn more about this. | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (5) | | | | 1. Developing effective discipline techniques. What type of discipline will encourage my children to do what I want them to do and to stop doing things that get them into trouble? | | | | (17) |
| (6) | | | | 2. Building children's self-esteem. How can I help my children feel good about themselves and believe that they are important and able individuals? | | | | (18) |
| (7) | | | | 3. Guiding children's social development. How can I teach my children to respect the rights of others, share, play and work cooperatively, and get along with their siblings? | | | | (19) |
| (8) | | | | 4. Stimulating intellectual development. How can I help my children successfully complete their school assignments, be curious, creative, and motivated to learn? | | | | (20) |
| (9) | | | | 5. Promoting moral development. How can I guide my children so they not only know how society expects them to behave, but will desire to do what is right and is beneficial to other people? | | | | (21) |
| (10) | | | | 6. Assisting children's emotional development. How can I help my children mature emotionally so they can express their feelings in useful and socially approved ways? | | | | (22) |
| (11) | | | | 7. Setting realistic expectations. What should children know and be able to do at a given age? Are my expectations reasonable and realistic? | | | | (23) |
| (12) | | | | 8. Recognizing deviant development and appropriate sources of help. How can I know if my child has a physical, mental, or emotional problem that needs attention, such as poor hearing or hyperactivity? Where can I go for help with this problem? | | | | (24) |
| (13) | | | | 9. Providing for the physical needs of children. What can I do to help my children grow, be healthy and strong, and physically able? | | | | (25) |
| (14) | | | | 10. Improving human interaction through good communication skills. How should I talk to my children so they will understand what I mean and want to discuss thing with me? | | | | (26) |
| (15) | | | | 11. Assisting in the development of a value system. How can I help my children decide what is important in life, what is worth their time, money and energy? How can I help them remain free from chemical dependency? | | | | (27) |
| (16) | | | | 12. Selecting safe and stimulating play objects and activities. What types of toys, games, and activities are safe and stimulating and will help my children grow and develop? | | | | (28 |

Other areas in which help has been requested _____



66

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

As an educator, are you willing to help parents with their parenting concerns? Is this part of the educator's job? What are your opinions about the proper role of the school in relating to parenting concerns? (29)
(Write your opinions here and on reverse side, if necessary.)

Please provide information about yourself by either checking the correct category or by completing the blanks.

Sex: 1. Male ____ 2. Female ____ (30)

Marital Status: 1. ____ Married (31)
2. ____ Single
3. ____ Separated or Divorced
4. ____ Widowed

Number of Children you have as a parent: _____ (32-33)

Type of School: 1. ____ Public (34)
2. ____ Private

School Assignment (specific grades, subjects, or split assignments): _____ (35-37)

_____

Number of full years of experience as an educator (including this year): _____ (38-39)

Institution from which you received your Bachelor's Degree: _____ (40-41)

Has a class or workshop in parenting education been offered by your school district within the past five years? (42)
1. ____ yes
2. ____ no
3. ____ uncertain

Has a workshop or class in parenting education been taught by some other organization in your community (such as church, clubs, social services dept.) during the past five years? (43)
1. ____ yes
2. ____ no
3. ____ uncertain

If "yes" is checked, please indicate the organization. _____

School Building Enrollment: _____ (44-47)

School District Enrollment: _____ (48-52)

Thank you very much for answering this questionnaire.

Beverly Uhlenberg
Richard Hill



67

REFERENCES


Abt, Helen Frances. "Day Care Parents' Sources of Childrearing Knowledge." M. S. Thesis, Iowa State University, 1982.

Bell, Terrel H. "The Relationship Between Home and School: A Commentary on the Current Scene." In Parenting in a Multicultural Society: Practice and Policy, pp. 223-31. Edited by Mario D. Fantini and Rene Cardenes. New York: Longman, 1980.

Berger, Eugenia Hepworth. Parents as Partners in Education. St. Louis: The C. V. Mosby Company, 1981.

Bloom, Benjamin S. All Our Children Learning. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1981.

_____. Stability and Change in Human Characteristics. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1964.

Brim, Orville G., Jr. Education for Child Rearing. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1959.

Brooks, James B. The Process of Parenting. Palo Alto, California: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1981.

Fine, Marvin J. Parents vs. Children: Making the Relationship Work. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1979.

Gordon, Sol, and Wallin, Mina. Parenting: A Guide for Young People. Chicago: Oxford Book Company, 1975.

Harman, David, and Brim, Orville G., Jr. Learning to be Parents. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1980.

Lauderdale, Michael L. "Issues in Disseminating Parent Knowledge and Skills." In Families and Schools: Implementing Parent Education. Denver: Educational Commission of the States, Report No. 121, 1979, pp. 34-36.

McAfee, Oralie. "Parent Education: Needed Characteristics and Necessary Concerns." In Families and Schools: Implementing Parent Education. Report 121, pp. 37-41. Denver: Educational Commission of the States, 1979.

Nedler, Shari E., and McAfee, Oralie D. Working with Parents: Guidelines for Early Childhood and Elementary Teachers. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1979.

Schaefer, Earl S. Perspectives on the Family. Arlington, VA: ERIC Document Service, ED 183 246, 1979.

Swick, Kevin J., and Duff, R. Eleanor. Parenting. Washington, D. C.: National Education Association, 1979.

Yankelovich, Skelly, and White, Inc. Raising Children in a Changing Society. Minneapolis: General Mills, Inc., 1977.

Other reports available from the Bureau of Educational Research and Services:

No. 1, June, 1976, "Expectations for the Role of Superintendent of Schools," by Mark S. Sanford and Donald L. Piper.

No. 3, July, 1976, "Teacher Needs in North Dakota: 1976-1981," by Larry L. Smiley and Sylvia E. Stites.

No. 6, November, 1976, "Saving Money Through Group Bidding by North Dakota School Districts," by Daniel R. O'Shea and Donald L. Piper.

No. 8, August, 1977, "An Analysis of the Use of Math Manipulative Materials in North Dakota," by Ronald Kutz.

No. 9, June, 1978, "Multi-Dimensional Screening Device (MDSD) for the Identification of Gifted/Talented Children," by Bella Kranz.

No. 11, April, 1979, "Expectations for the Role of Cooperative Special Education Director," by Robert R. Duncan and Richard L. Hill.

No. 12, April, 1980, "Policies on Staff Reduction Due to Declining Enrollment in North Dakota Schools," by Donald D. Ost and Donald K. Lemon.

No. 14, June, 1981, "An Investigation of North Dakota's Special Education Commercial Curriculum Material," by Drew Denton and Donna Hartman.

No. 15, October, 1981, "The Nature of Programs Serving Preschool Handicapped Children in North Dakota," by Amy Glasser Dell.

No. 17, April, 1982, "The Relationship Between Students' and Instructors' Perceptions of Feedback and the Students' Perceptions of the Instructors' Teaching Effectiveness," by Diane Voeller, Cecilia Volden, and David Carl.

No. 18, November, 1982, "The Elementary Principalship in North Dakota, by Donald K. Lemon, Isabel Hovel, Jeanette Lindquist, and Ann Porter.

B E
R S

**Bureau of Educational Research and Services**

**University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, North Dakota 58202**